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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002491

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2011

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PRE-DEPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT

REF: A. STATE 162318

[B](#). ABUJA 2421

[C](#). ABUJA NI2443

[D](#). IIR 7 800 0307 01

[E](#). IIR 7 800 0297 01

[F](#). ABUJA 2331

[G](#). ABUJA 2477

Classified by CDA Andrews; Reasons 1.5 (d/g)

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INTRODUCTION
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[1](#)1. (C) Embassy received Ref A request for pre-deployment assessment on 26 September. By this date, deployments for Operation Focus Relief trainers were already well underway, and training had already begun at Birnin-Kebbi (training in Ilorin and Serti is scheduled to begin on 8 October). Additionally, Mission has provided Department with a general security and stability assessment for Nigeria (Ref B) and Mission-wide tripwires (Ref G). However, Embassy gladly provides the following analysis specific to the security of OFR personnel, in the event of a negative public reaction to U.S. action against terrorists.

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GENERAL ASSESSMENT
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[1](#)2. (C) The likelihood of ethnic or religious unrest in Nigeria in the wake of an eventual U.S. response to the September 11 acts of terror is high. Such unrest would not necessarily be targeted at American individuals or institutions, but American lives and property could be at risk. Tensions here remain elevated following recent events in Jos and Wukari. Demonstrations -- either in favor of or opposing U.S. military actions -- could spark renewed ethno-religious fighting, especially in the Middle Belt, but potentially almost anywhere. Major Muslim religious leaders here have unequivocally condemned the attacks on the U.S. However, many Muslims will be angered over any U.S. reprisal attack that affects fellow Muslims, especially if there are significant civilian casualties. Some Muslims can be expected to stage protests, as they did during the Gulf War and following our reprisals for the Embassy bombings in 1998.

The GON is willing to protect U.S. diplomats and installations in Abuja and Lagos, but its ability to do so is not unlimited. Outside of Abuja and the Lagos Islands, the GON's means of controlling civil unrest are even less robust. Recently, the GON has managed to quell serious unrest in Jos only with the assistance of the military, and then after a substantial loss of life.

[1](#)3. (C) The Nigerian military is not seen as an effective institution. Due to a long history of harsh military rule, the military is viewed by most of the population with suspicion. However, when civil unrest occurs in Nigeria, at-risk populations regularly flee to military bases to seek protection from this ethnically and religiously mixed (and armed) institution. The military has historically welcomed onto its bases and protected these fleeing populations. While rioters may overrun police stations, they steer clear of major military installations. Therefore, unrest is not likely to threaten military bases, but bases could be faced with streams of displaced persons seeking protection.

[1](#)4. (C) Based on planning for force protection, all OFR personnel, with the exception of 3rd Group LNOs who work out of the Embassy and live in an Abuja hotel, live on or next to Nigerian military installations. As noted above, general unrest in Nigeria is unlikely to move against military installations in a threatening manner. Therefore, unrest, whether caused by ethnic tensions or a reaction to a U.S. response against terrorists, OFR personnel are most secure on the Nigerian military bases where they live and work. DATT, as COR for OFR P3, recently garnered additional resources from the Department of State for force protection at the

bases, and has instructed PA&E to begin the installation of additional force protection measures.

15. (C) The Nigerian military began to take immediate steps to provide additional force protection to OFR sites after the event of September 11, in some cases adding additional security without requests being made. The military is also working to provide other types of additional force protection support to 3rd Group personnel (Ref D).

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LOCATION SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT
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16. (C) FOB ABUJA: FOB Abuja is located at a Nigerian Air Force installation within walking distance of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. There are no large population centers near the base, and while the OFR base can be seen from the airport road, visibility is largely obscured by a long row of trees, a cement wall and other protection measures such as containers. Because of the high amount of traffic in and out of the FOB (due to its nature as a command center) and its location near the airport, the FOB does have a higher profile than the other bases. However, the Nigerian military has augmented its protection detail at the base.

17. (C) BIRNIN-KEBBI: PolMilOff and DATT have had several conversations with Kebbi Governor Mohammed Aleiro regarding OFR and Mission concerns for the well-being of OFR personnel in Kebbi State (Refs E and F). His assurances have been significant. Kebbi State is sparsely populated, and has not in the past been the site of any demonstrations of note. The U.S. temporary base camp is located on the Nigerian military base and is remote from the town of Birnin-Kebbi.

18. (C) ILORIN: Ilorin is politically restive, but this is an ethnically-driven issue. The U.S. camp is toward the rear of a Nigerian Army Base that is not close to the town.

19. (C) SERTI: The base in Serti is extremely isolated and not located near any population centers of note. While Taraba State has suffered bouts of ethnic conflict, Serti itself has been tranquil.

110. (C) SAFEHAVEN: In the unlikely event of forced evacuation from a U.S. temporary base, OFR personnel would move to Abuja to the FOB. Depending on the situation, the personnel would be moved by MI-8 helicopter (there is one MI-8 helicopter stationed at each base) and/or road convoy.

111. (U) This message was cleared with 3rd Group Battalion Commander LTC Sherwood.
Andrews